

# **California Performance Review**

Written Testimony for 9/9/04

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The recently completed review of California's agencies and operational structure has percolated to the surface areas of success in governance, as well as areas in need of improvement. This is a bold step toward reforming the state's ability to serve its residents by creating a system that runs efficiently, clearly and for the benefit of everyone involved. With regard to education, the recommendations contained in the California Performance Review final report reflect the evolving nature of our education system as a whole. I wish to submit the following comments pertaining to select recommendations on behalf of LEED-Sacramento.

ETV-1 With regards to creating a Department of Education and Workforce Preparation. A comprehensive position coordinating programs, services and supports for education and workforce preparation will act to increase youth access to existing resources. The Secretary position would promote a closer link between the education system and employers by helping to fill the needs of California's businesses with skilled, educated employees.

ETV-2 With regard to establishing the Education and Workforce Council. The list of recommended council members should include a business leader, as well as a representative of a workforce development organization. These roles would lend invaluable perspective as the council sets vision, goals and strategy toward aligning education and workforce preparedness.

With regard to the council's responsibilities, the council should additionally be charged with reviewing data driven needs and results by region. Programs and initiatives that are developing a trained workforce by aligning education and workforce preparedness should be reviewed to ensure they are meeting the local industry workforce needs.

ETV-8 With regard to concurrent enrollment. Concurrent enrollment perpetuates individualized attention and increased ability to respond to student needs and facilitates smaller learning environments and smaller schools when students are able to enroll in college classes rather than funding separate AP classes within the small schools. Smaller learning environments and small schools are proven to increase student graduation rates, college enrollment rates and work readiness.

ETV-10 With regard to linking performance contracts. Recommend or require that school districts include partnerships with local intermediaries to increase community and parent involvement. Performance contracts reflect the school districts' accountability to their communities, and priority should be granted to those districts that actively work to make community involvement a priority.

ETV-18 With regard to nonresidential fees. Pending Federal legislation (DREAM Act) would waive non-residential fees for students who have resided in the United States for over 10 years. This is very important to those students who, through no fault of their own, have resided in California most of their lives but who are not legal residents.

ETV-25 With regard to career exploration and work readiness experience. The skills employees need in the next decade will change significantly from what they are currently. Students need school and work-based education. Public education needs to better prepare all students for work, both through school and work-based learning. All students need 'soft' skills – working as a team, thinking in terms of project-based activities, oral and written communication abilities and critical thinking and problem solving. These skills are developed at an accelerated pace when students develop them in a workplace setting.

Linking all students with career exploration activities allows them to have a much more mature experience that will provide motivation for college. These "school-to-career" opportunities provide mentoring relationships with caring adults outside the school environment and help students relate academic studies with real world. The results of school-to-career activities on student performance, especially attendance, graduation, grade point averages and college going rates, have benefited students for many years. All students should have these same experiences to be prepared for further education, work and citizenship.

Employers, especially those with high employee recruitment needs, understand the value of exposing students to their jobs. In the Sacramento Region, health care, construction and engineering, technology and the hospitality industries rely on young people becoming interested in their career fields to fill these needs. The employers have been very supportive and also find their employees benefit from interaction with young people in internships, job shadows and mentoring activities.

We recommend that more students – in fact, all students – be given these opportunities. This can be accomplished by linking career exploration to academic preparedness in individual learning plans for each student. LEED and other business/education intermediaries can play an important role seeking employer involvement for both students and teachers.

Thank you for your interest in our testimony. I am sorry I can not be with you today to deliver this in person. The staff at LEED-Sacramento is available to answer questions, schedule interviews of business leaders, educators and/or tours of programs and schools involved in high school reform and workforce development through career exploration. Your continued support of this work is critical to developing all our youth resources to meet the needs of employers and the future economic development of our Region and our State.